

THE
COUNTRY SPECTATOR.

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Εἰ μοι καλά πελεῖ τὰ μελῦδρια, καὶ ταδε μῦθα
Κυδοῖς ἔμοι θησονί, τὰ μοι παρὸς ὥπασε Μοῖσα*
Εἰ δ' ἔχ' ἀδεια ταῦτα, τί μοι πολὺ πλεονα μοχθεῖν;
BION.

If grace or sweetness in my verse abound,
Enough my Muse has sung to be renown'd :
But if no merit mark my humble lays,
Why longer should I toil in quest of praise ?

THE progress of a Periodical Paper may not unaptly be said to be an epitome of life. The writer sets out with hope, glee and spirit. He fondly talks of his schemes of acquiring wealth and fame, and for a while enjoys the golden dream of success. He imagines, that he has discovered a path, which others have not observed, or which they have forbore to pursue ; and doubts not that it was reserved for him to open mines of instruction and explore regions of entertainment.

SCARCELY has he begun his journey, when the prospect is less fair: yet Hope, the attendant of Enterprize, forbids him to be sad, and his earlier disappointments are ascribed to causes, which promise soon to disappear. He attributes sarcasm or neglect to the malevolence of competitors or the silence of friends: and doubts not that his merit will shortly blaze forth, dazzling Envy and enlightening Ignorance.

IN the mean time, he endeavours to adopt his manner to the public taste, and in the pursuit of popularity, essays all the arts of pleasing. If gravity fail to secure him respect, he assumes an air of cheerfulness: if familiarity be the subject of complaint, he quits the topic of the day for moral disquisition. He finds, however, that the objects of censure are equally numerous with the ways of courting applause; so that when every artifice has been employed, perhaps, with little success, wearied with disappointment, and disgusted with caprice, he resolves to relinquish his design, and retires from the notice of those, whom he has vainly sought to please. Reasons, somewhat different, but not wholly dissimilar to these, have occasioned the present determination of the COUNTRY SPECTATOR; who thus early in the progress of his undertaking bids his Readers adieu, and closes his volume.

It is not my design to make this my last Paper, a

funeral oration of myself, or to offend the Reader by an endeavour to display excellence, which he has never discovered and consequently never applauded. I am sufficiently aware of the many imperfections, with which the best of my performances are chargeable ; nor can I justly complain that the reception of my work has been less favourable, than it deserved. For part, however, of its imperfections I may surely be allowed to apologize, if truth be not violated in the attempt or modesty infringed.

THE *Country Spectator* enjoyed few of the advantages, which have contributed to the excellence of most of his predecessors. He could not depend on assistance when he was weary, or promise variety to his speculations from the number of his Correspondents. When it is seen, that for only *six* entire Papers he is indebted to his friends, it will be confessed that the burthen of the undertaking rested almost solely on himself : and whoever has encountered the task of writing at stated periods, will readily testify, that the burthen is heavier than is generally believed, or, perhaps, than he himself had imagined.

STILL it must be confessed, that the production of of a weekly Essay is by no means an *Herculean* labour, where the writer has little else to do than to collect remarks and amuse his imagination. But it was not amid ease and leisure, that these Papers were produced. They were written during short intervals sto-

len from continued interruption, when the spirits were exhausted with fatigue or the mind sickened with disgust; at a time, when the necessity of writing was rendered doubly painful, when exertion must be feeble, and excellence is scarcely to be attained. These considerations may deservedly soften the severity of Criticism, though they cannot melt it into kindness; they may serve to mitigate censure, though they cannot secure applause.

ON a review, however, of these Essays, I cannot think them altogether so defective in variety, as might have been expected from the paucity of the Authors. I have sometimes endeavoured to lead the Reader into abstract speculation, and sometimes I have prattled about the nonsense of the day: in some instances I have paid regard to the rotundity of periods and correctness of composition; in others I have attempted to be colloquial, and have been negligent from design.

How far these Papers may claim the praise of originality, I must leave to the determination of those, who by extensive reading are enabled to detect plagiarism or servile imitation. In the mean time I am satisfied in the consciousness of having, in no instance, knowingly used the sentiments of others without acknowledging the obligation. On the contrary, I have more than once suppressed the publication of an Essay, from a timely discovery that the

subject had been anticipated and treated in nearly the same manner by some preceding writer.

I HAVE adopted the custom of prefixing a short quotation to every Number, in conformity with the practice of the earlier Essayists, though it has been neglected and exploded by many of their successors. This I have done, from an opinion that where there exists a happy coincidence betwixt the thought in the motto and the general tenor of the Paper, the mind of the Reader feels a degree of pleasure, which it could not otherwise have received. That this coincidence exists between any of the mottoes and Papers in this work, is more than I dare affirm: but the possibility of success was sufficient to justify the attempt.

THAT all these Papers should be *appropriate* was never professed or intended: but if upon enquiry it be found, that a considerable majority of them are on such subjects, as more particularly belong to Country life, the end of the writer will have been fully accomplished. He wished only to give the whole a sort of rural aspect, such as the writings of none of his predecessors have hitherto assumed.

WHAT, then, are the hopes of a writer, whose work is confessedly so imperfect and whose design is left thus incomplete? Who had conceived an extensive plan, and had fixt upon a subject, which

might have produced volumes?—They are, that the COUNTRY SPECTATOR will be considered as a *Fragment*, affording a presumption of what might be done, rather than a specimen of any thing yet effected; and sufficient to furnish a hint to those, who enjoy ease and opportunity in the Country, who tread the paths of observation, and who can rely upon assistance. This is all that I can reasonably expect from impartial decision. But, whatever may be the sentence pronounced on my trifles by the voice of Criticism, I fondly indulge the hope, that in the neighbourhood of the place where these Papers were published, my name will linger a while, ere it glide down the current of time into the ocean of oblivion.

T. F. MIDDLETON.

To a Correspondent.

The C. S. is happy in having well-wishers, such as the writer of the letter signed SIMKIN.

THE END.



